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May 14, 2008

The Honorable Brad Henry
Governor of Oklahoma
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Room 212
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Governor Henry:

On behalf of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), I write to voice our opposition to the Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act, which was added as an amendment to HB 2633. Should this bill become law, it could have serious negative consequences for science education in Oklahoma.

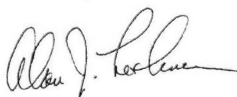
The bill ostensibly seeks to protect students who want to express religious viewpoints during class and in homework assignments. This could apply to science class as well, of course, and as federal Judge John E. Jones III ruled in Pennsylvania, religion has no place in the science classroom. The bill likely would undermine the teaching of the science of evolution and other topics that some students believe could conflict with their religious beliefs. For example, if a student were to state on an exam that the age of the earth is 6,000 years old, according to his/her religious belief, rather than the 4.5 billion years cited in the textbook, this bill could potentially force his/her teacher to give the student a good grade for an incorrect response. This is no way to teach science.

Teachers already face a myriad of challenges in the classroom—why add yet another? Furthermore, why approve a bill that may well invite constitutional challenges as religion is introduced in public science classrooms?

Students who learn about evolution and other essential scientific concepts will undoubtedly be better prepared to compete for high-skill jobs in an increasingly high-tech world economy. I urge you to protect the future of science education and technology-based industry in Oklahoma and veto this bill.

AAAS, the world's largest multi-disciplinary science society, representing the interests of ten million scientists and engineers worldwide, and publisher of the prestigious peer-reviewed journal *Science*, has a longstanding interest and expertise in science education. We stand ready to assist you in any way that would be helpful.

Sincerely,



Alan I. Leshner